Love and Jihad. Female Trajectories from North Caucasus to the Islamic State

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Denis Sokolov
Independent scholar, Kiyv, Ukraine
denis.sokolov.dc@gmail.com

Abstract

In the 2000s, Al-Qaeda, represented by the Caucasus Emirate, took over the first Chechen resistance, as well as local Islamist armed groups in Dagestan and other re- publics of the North Caucasus. However, a decade later, the Islamic State won the com- petition with Al-Qaeda, by including the involvement of women in its project. Hundreds of Russian-speaking Muslim women followed men to live by the rules of Islam. Some joined their husbands or children. Others travelled to the Islamic State in pursuit of love and romance with future husbands they had met on the internet. Based on exclusive interviews done with women detained in the Roj detention camp in the Kurdish territories in northeastern Syria near the Iraqi border, this article analyzes some of the trajectories that has pushed young North Caucasian women to the Syrian war theater in the name of love.

Keywords

Islamism – jihad – North Caucasus – gender – Islamic State

After[1] Islamic State (IS) jihadis seized control of several major cities[2] and the IS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared a "caliphate" with the Syrian city of Raqqa as its capital on 29 July 2014, the number of foreign nationals coming to

1 This text was prepared with the support of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). Translation from Russia by Elena Pavlovich.

2 Author's field materials: interview with a Dagestani woman held with her children in a Kurdish detention camp in Syria, 2018–2019.

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fight in the Syrian civil war significantly increased. Hundreds of Russian-speaking Muslim women followed men to live by the rules of Islam. Some joined their husbands or children. Some, on the contrary, left their families behind to heed the call of "a handsome brother fighting on Allah's way."3 Others travelled to the IS in pursuit of love and romance with future husbands they had met on the internet.4 As a result, both women and their children ended up in the war zone. Mothers and grandmothers hoping to take their sons, daughters, or grandchildren back home came to Syria next. With the progressive closure of the Turkish–Syrian border, all these young and old female *muhajirs* found themselves imprisoned in the war theater.5 Many were killed by bombs, snipers, or shelling in Mosul, Raqqa, and Mayadin, as well as in open country near Baghouz.6 Dozens of children brought to the IS by their parents or born "inside"7 were orphaned or died because of bombardments, hunger, or extreme cold. Hundreds, if not thousands, of women and children ended up in Iraqi or Kurdish prisons or detention camps. Only a few made it to Idlib, Turkey, or Russia. Their dreams of *hijra*—re-emigrating to genuine Islamic territories— turned out to be hell on earth.8

Based on exclusive interviews done with women detained in the Roj detention camp in the Kurdish territories in northeastern Syria near the Iraqi border, this article analyzes some of the trajectories that has pushed young North Caucasian women to the Syrian war theater in the name of love. According to the women we interviewed, there are about 100 Russian-speaking widows in the Roj detention camp, not counting their children. However, our attempt to do a head count remotely returned a different result (see Table 1 in the Appendix). As for the other detention camp in the Al-Hasakah Governorate, al-Hol, after a

3 Artem Krechetnikov, "Chto iskala v Sirii Varvara Karaulova," *BBC Russian*, 10 November 2015, https://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2015/11/151110_qd_karaulova_motivation (accessed in November 2019).

4 Author's field materials: interview with a Dagestani woman held with her children in a Kurdish detention camp in Syria, 2018–2019.

5 Quentin Sommerville, "Life inside the chaos left by the Islamic State group's fall," *BBC*, 28 February 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47407440 (accessed in November 2019).

6 The word "inside" is used by Russian-speaking Muslims to refer to the IS territories.

7 "Voina v Sirii: kto kontroliruet Idlib," *BBC Russian*, 10 September 2018, https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-45476176 (accessed in November 2019).

8 Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Path- ways toward Terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence," 2008, pp. 415–433, doi: 10.1080/09546550802073367; Olivier Roy, "Jihad and death: The global appeal of Islamic State" (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 2017.

huge inflow of people detained in Baghouz, the number of Russian-speaking detainees among its over 70,000 prisoners can hardly be estimated.9

Although the information in Table 1 in the Appendix does not reach statistical significance, it offers unique access to biographies and self-narratives of women who found themselves as part of the Iraqi and Syrian war theaters. Twenty-six out of these 51 women came from Dagestan (51%); women from Chechnya are the second largest group (16%). Seven of these women are grand- mothers who came to take their children and grandchildren home (14%). Twenty-eight women in this group (55%) followed their husbands. Only six women (12%) left to be with men they met on the internet. As most of them left for Syria between 2014 and 2015, at the time of their departure they were between 19 and 26 years old, respectively. Forty-four women in this group (grandmothers excluded, and childless women included) have a total of 108 children, equaling roughly, 2.45 children per woman.

1 Radical Ideologies as a Market and the North Caucasus Long Conflicts

In his book *Jihad and Death*, Olivier Roy argues that "[i]t's the Islamification of radicalism that we need to investigate, not the radicalisation of Islam."10 In the North Caucasus, people have been converting to different strands of Islam in search of their identity or to find answers to fundamental questions. Such neophytes were often no radicals before or right after their indoctrination, and only a minority embrace radical interpretations of Islam. According to Roy's keen observation, "these 'new radicals' embrace the Islamic State's narrative as it is the only radical narrative available in the 'global market of fundamentalist ideologies.'" Roy continues, "In the past they would have been drawn, for example, to far left political extremism."11

In Russia's North Caucasus, Islam has been seen as the religion of modernization and the escape route from family or community control as well as from the grip of conventions and limitations presented as ancestral traditions.12 In the two decades following the break-up of the Soviet Union, both the Caucasian rural community and the Soviet bureaucracy collapsed. Islam rapidly

9 International Committee of the Red Cross, "Syria's Al Hol Camp: Families in Desperate Need," March 22, 2019.

10 Olivier Roy, op. cit., p. 41.

11 Olivier Roy, op. cit., p. 6.

12 D. V. Sokolov and I. V. Starodubrovskaya, *Istoriia konfliktov na Severnom Kavkaze* (Moscow: Delo), 2013.

replaced Soviet ideology. In Dagestan, "new Muslims" initiated local revolutions in their rural communities13 and then engaged in latent civil war with the ruling elite,14 which included post-Soviet bureaucracy, security forces, criminals, and official clergy.

In Chechnya, the two wars turned Islam and Sharia into the religion and law of the national liberation fight as early as 1995. Salafi Islam has been standing against Russian ideological and law enforcement machines on the one hand, and the collaborationist *Khadhi-muridi* (Sufi) Islam strand15 and *ustaz* descendants16 on the other. *Jamaats*—communities formed on a territorial principle out of members from the same village or district—became the core of Chechen Islamic resistance groups and, later, armed insurgency groups under the command of an *amir*. In the Caucasus Emirate, members of such *jamaats* and their family members were the backbone of the armed insurgency and produced two or three generations of its leadership. However, they comprised the minority of the Russian-speaking migrants to Syria and Iraq.

By the early 2010s, the collapse of rural communities, urbanization, the formation of transnational migration networks, and instant access to information via the internet rendered the ambitions of younger North Caucasians global, especially those of second-generation immigrants. The rural youth "virtually migrated" from the Soviet *jamaat*17 to the cities with the help of their smartphones, and have been sharing much more in common with their urban peers than with their parents. The project of the caliphate thus resonated with theirpersonal ambitions.

Islamisation of the North Caucasian youth was growing as *jamaats* were establishing their control over streets and even schools, both at home and in émigré communities.18 Businessmen widely turned to Sharia courts when the

13 Author's field materials, Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, Gubden and Gimry, 2012–2016.

14 E. F. Kisriev, *Islam i vlast' v Dagestane* (Moscow: OGI, 2004).

15 *Khadhi-muridi* is a Sufi strand in Islam common in Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia, mostly among Chechen and Ingush people. The founder of the strand is Kunta- Hadji Kishiev, *ustaz* (teacher) from the Chechen village of Ilaskhan-Yurt.

16 *Ustaz* descendants are the informal institution for conflict resolution and reputation distribution based on the special status of the direct descendants of Sufi sheikhs.

17 Reference to the Soviet *kishlak*. See: S. N. Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak. Mezhdu kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* (Moscow: NLO), 2015. For more information on *jamaats* in Dagestan, see: V.O. Bobrovnikov, "Kolkhoz kak osnova islamskogo pod"ema," *Islam v sovremennom mire*, No. 13(2), 2017, pp. 105–116; Yu. Yu. Karpov, "Gornoe dagestanskoe selenie: ot traditsionnogo dzhamaata k nyneishnemu sotsial'nomu obliku," in *Severnyi Kavkaz: traditsionnoe sel'skoe obshchestvo – sotsial'nie roli, obshchestvennoe mnenie, vlastnie otnosheniia*, ed. S.A. Shtyrkov (St. Petersburg: Nauka) 2007, pp. 5–74.

18 Author's field materials, Kabardino-Balkaria, 2010–2018.

"forest enforcement"19 was effective. And finally, the successes of the IS in battle caused a huge inflow of *muhajirs* to Syria and Iraq. For children born and raised in the armed *jamaats* in Chechnya or in some rural communities in Dagestan, such as Karamakhi, Gimry, or Balakhani, already outlawed, leaving for Syria as early as 2014 was the way to perform *hijra*. One of the Caucasus Emirate leaders, an Al-Qaeda supporter, complained that "the Emirate is losing younger supporters [to the IS]."20

The older generation of Ichkerian separatists21 or *jamaat* members lost their weight in the eyes of their children and younger brothers.22 First, they were seen as collaborationists.

> Kadyrov tied us to Russia and to Putin, and we were brought to our knees … That is why they left for Syria—younger people … do not trust their elders who first supported jihad and then suddenly changed sides … they do not trust religious [or nationalist leaders] … they are in great chaos.23

Second, the older generation maintains their Soviet or post-Soviet identity while younger people's identity, both religious and ethnic, differs. The second generation of internal migrants in Makhachkala, Moscow, Surgut, or Tyumen—from where hundreds of young Muslim men and women left to fight for the caliphate—resents the lifestyle of their parents, who had to work for 30 years to buy their own flat.24 They are ambitious and want equal opportunities with Russians in Moscow, Germans in Berlin, and French people in Paris. However, Northern Caucasus internal migrants' negative reputation among Russian public opinion create a glass ceiling. They thus have to choose between two paths. They can become hard-working people who put in every effort to prove that they are worthy like everyone else entering the competition with their peers from a disadvantaged position, only to realize that sooner or later they will hit the glass ceiling. Or they can become jihadis and feel superior

19 The armed insurgency in Dagestan enforced Sharia judges' decisions. Author's field materials, Maidanskoe, 2014; Gotsatl, 2018.

20 Author's field materials, Istanbul, 2016.

21 Ichkerian separatists, the supporters of the independent Ichkeria (Chechnya), saw their conflict with Russia as war of national liberation rather than jihad.

22 Author's field materials, Berlin,2018,2019, Vienna, 2019, Brussels, 2018, 2019.

23 Author's field materials, interview with a 55-year-old woman, Berlin, 2019.

24 D.V. Sokolov, "Ugra, the Dagestani North: An Anthropology of Mobility Between the North Caucasus and Western Siberia, New Mobilities and Social Changes in Russia's Arctic Regions," Routledge Research in Polar Regions, ed. Marlene Laruelle (London: Routledge, 2016), 173–193.

because of their strong faith and readiness to die. The second option is readily available.

2 Women Trajectories to Syria: Both Emancipation and Submission

A similar but slightly different process explains how women left for the Syrian war theater. A new marriage market emerged around seemingly successful and daring North Caucasian fighters in Syria. This market had its own culture of gender relations and its own networks alternative to traditional ones. Many women who had gone through the two Chechen wars or the covert civil war in Dagestan followed their husbands to Syria:

> … Many young women in Dagestan rushed to Syria because they had no husbands or brothers. They had no one left; everyone was killed. They were abandoned and left behind; they felt emptiness inside and did not know what to do next, how to live on … and they rushed there to be useful, to help …25

In the Islamic social environment, young women's demands for emancipation26 from family, community, and men's dominance have been much less politicized, but more personally justified than the demands of men. Moreover, the marriage market,27 imposed by rural communities, affects women to a greater extent than men. Men have found the solution to this problem in polygamy: according to one of our interviewees, the first wife is for starting a family, and the second wife is for pleasure.28 Women do not have such a choice.

The rural family institution has been experiencing a serious crisis in urban and migration settings that dramatically affected women's status. For example, in the mid-2010s in a rural mountain community in Dagestan, three-quarters

25 Author's field materials: interview with a 36-year-woman, Istanbul, 2018.

26 Irina Kosterina, "Life and Status of Women in the North Caucasus. Report summary on survey," Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 19 August 2015, https://ru.boell.org/en/2015/08/20/life- and-status-women-north-caucasus-report-summary-survey-irina-kosterina (accessed in November 2019); E. L. Kapustina, "Sel'skie etiudy k gorodskomu peizazhu: transformatsiia gorodskogo prostranstva v kontektse migratsionnykh protsessov v Dagestana i sel'skie zemliachestva v Makhachkale v nachale 21ogo veka," in *Kavkazskii gorod: potentsial etnokulturnykh sviazei v urbanisticheskoi srede*, ed. Maka Albogachieva (St Petersburg, 2013), pp. 111–175.

27 The marriage market involves status and reputation bargaining to distribute bachelors and potential brides within rural communities. See: D. Sokolov, "Three Generations of Karata," op. cit.

28 Author's field materials, 2016–2017.

of whose residents moved to the flatlands (mostly to Makhachkala, Dagestan's capital), the divorce rate for first marriages arranged within the community was 100%.29 Rich men in their forties have been increasingly marrying young divorcées from other communities or girls who could not find a match in their own village as their second wives. Sometimes, they create a full-fledged second family. They use the situation to buy or force sexual services from women.

There have been multiple examples that demonstrate the difficult and humiliating position of women who lost or escaped from the protection of their community and failed to find other support: Shamilkala is said to be the town of second wives;30 Buynaksk hosts an Islamic brothel "MamaRosa;" and in the same city a scandal arose around a powerful figure who used to marry women, promise to help them, and "divorced" from them the next day.31

To escape from their everyday life, some women start socializing on social media and connect, via the WhatsApp application, with new men who influence their interpretation of Islam and drive their path toward Syria. The Islamic State offered these women a solution. It pledged to fulfil their dream of love, a quiet life, and maintaining their religion, which could not be realized at home. So *muhajirs*' call to convert to Islam, join the caliphate, and marry heroic warriors of jihad—all at once—work out.

> Of course, they fall in love with this image of a hero, of a man who is ready to sacrifice his life for justice. … A woman who sees this wants to participate, to help him … she also wants to get this … sense of calmness.32

If you are brave enough to beat your wife at home … why don't you go to war where you can prove your masculinity? … Such sharp contrasts make [a woman] want to drop it altogether, leave everything behind and go to some place free of such humiliation.33

Some far-radicals would say, 'Your marriage is void because your husband is no Muslim. How can you live with him, with such a weak man, a coward, who

29 D. Sokolov, "Three Generations of Karata," op. cit.

30 For more information on Shamilkala, the town of second wives, see: D. V. Sokolov, "Zatoplennyi mir koisubulintsev," op. cit.

31 Author's field materials: interview with a 37-year-old woman, Mahachkala, 2016, and "Tsel'iu operatsii modzhakhedov bliz Buinakska byl bordel pod viveskoi sauny," *Kavkacenter*, Augusr 16, 2009, https://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2009/08/16/67400/ vilajyat-dagestan--tselyu-operatsii-modzhakhedov-bliz-bujnakska-byl-bordel-pod- vyveskoj-sauny.shtml.

32 Author's field materials: interview with a 55-year-old woman, Berlin, 2019.

33 Author's field materials: interview with a 36-year-old woman, Istanbul, 2018.

evades war when his help is needed?' So [these women] listen to their speech- es, drop everything and leave.34

Sometimes, the last straw can be law enforcement's listing a woman who wears black Islamic attire on the preventive register and opening an investigation, including questioning, taking DNA, performing searches, and confiscating her electronic devices. Meanwhile, widows and female relatives of armed group members are systematically pressured.According to the interviews with those who left for Syria, the words of the future husband indicating that the woman would be forcibly disappeared, harassed and, at best, killed often became a definitive argument. The person who said such words knowingly manipulated the woman: "Probably, the most important thing that I've come to understand is that human life is not worth much during the war; however, female life is worth nothing."35

When women headed for Syria on a massive scale, the authorities did not obstruct their departure and promptly issued travel documents to them, even to those on the preventive register who otherwise were prevented from leaving their home republics. In some cases, even people under house arrest or on bail managed to receive travel documents and leave.36

2.1 *Chocolate for Cappuccino?*

Some of our interviewees noted that it was "the combination of multiple factors" that pushed Muslims, both men and women, into the space where they could be free from previous limitations—the space of war. War, and the freedom from all obligations it offers, surpass everything else, distort one's perspective, and erode any moral values in the face of imminent death.

Scared of being alone before they die and in need of a woman, the IS men lured new wives to the caliphate via WhatsApp, appealing to their divine responsibility and their fear of reprisal by the security forces.

> I think the main [motive for leaving for Syria] was war. Of course, they kept saying—sort of dusting our cappuccino with chocolate—that they were [fighting] for Islam. … During the war, sometimes the only thing you have to do is survive. It [gives you] a kind of internal freedom. Of course, you can prove yourself … but otherwise it is just the feeling … of no obligations whatsoever.37

34 Author's field materials: interview with a 36-year-woman, Istanbul, 2018.
35 Author's field materials: interview with a 55-year-old woman, Berlin, 2019.
36 Author's field materials, Makhachkala, Istanbul and Lviv, 2014–2018.
37 Author's field materials: interview with a 55-year-old woman, Berlin, 2019.

All those on one side of the front line have a common truth. Men and women in a war become brothers and sisters in arms. Women who faced imminent death near Baghouz stood by the IS until the end and in many cases sacrificed their children. It is difficult to say whether it is faith that gives strength to people in despair, or despair that strengthens their faith. A WhatsApp message sent from Baghouz stated for instance:

> Today, a sister near me was wounded in her leg. Her leg was broken. She was in so much pain, but she did not stop saying, 'Oh, Allah! Forgive me!' A brother was administering first aid to her. She had difficulty breathing. The brother told her, 'Open your niqab to facilitate breathing.' And even then she would not open it no matter a good reason … I'm so proud of her.38

Men go to war to wipe clean their failures and debts. Women are often pushed over the edge and are weaponized by the losses and humiliations they survived. A second Chechen war veteran said:

> It is a violent business. It is very easy to pull on a widow's strings—these widows come of their own volition. In some cases, women and girls contacted *mujahidins* and said, 'I do not want to live. I want revenge. Give me something [a bomb or a suicide belt], and I will do it.' It is very understandable … But previously [the armed group members] used to answer, 'Sister, I swear to Allah, I will kill two men for your husband. Please go home … ' But since the radicals came, [the answer has been], 'Yes, sister, go! We'll give you everything and send you … ' That's how these female suicide bombers were created.

2.2 *Case Study 1: Stairway to Hell*

Zarema39 was born to a happy Soviet family in Makhachkala in 1980. Her mother worked at a research institute and her father at an electronic plant. Zarema met her future husband at school when she was 15, and they got married when she was 20. As she explained:

38 WhatsApp message sent from the Baghouz area, February 2019.

39 D. Sokolov, "Three Generations of Karata: The Transformation of a Daghestani Collective into a Global Islamic Religious Community", *Journal of Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, Volume 56 (2017). Issue 3–4, pp. 194–229.

> [My] story was typical for Russia and [the North] Caucasus. We were not Muslim believers, just regular young Russian [citizens]. We lived … like anyone else: went to clubs, discos, cafes and restaurants; studied at school; were admitted to the university … Our parents, both mine and my husband's, lived nearby, and we all maintained close ties. Everything was fine … I had four children, one after another. My husband was a successful businessman and owned several cars, apartments, land plots and houses. We had everything—ordinary life in Dagestan, not poor, notdull.

2.2.1 Path to Islam

Zarema and her husband belonged to the generation of Dagestani people of whom most grew up in secular families and later became a part of Islamic renaissance in the North Caucasus.40 Their older siblings, born between 1965 and 1975, were 16–25 years old when the USSR collapsed. They adopted Islam as a source of moral values and law in their everyday life, chose Sharia courts over the corrupt post-Soviet judicial system and mob rules, and became the first preachers and *amirs*. However, neither she nor her husband performed *namaz* or observed Islamic practices until the early 2010s.

> The decision to cover [my head] was not an easy one for me. I used to be such a stylish girl … I knew that it was the right thing to love our Creator, but going through big changes was very difficult.

Zarema's turn to Islam was mostly due to her family crisis and the external pressure exerted on her husband by his Muslim friends rather than for any political reasons.

> So I covered [my head] although I did not want to. … All this was because of my husband, him not coming home … I was jealous … I kept performing *namaz*, called to my God, and felt better. Moreover, my husband settled down and started to behave properly … when he stopped going to restaurants and casinos, everyone got very happy.

40 Zarema's brother was a close associate of a well-known Dagestani preacher and educator.He engaged in charitable activities; however, he was also forced to leave Russia.

Zarema's parents accepted her choice. The support of her brother, also a Muslim believer, was also very helpful.41 Neither she nor her husband had radicalised at this point.

2.2.2 Spiraling Down

Soon, new problems emerged. Zarema's husband was in the co-funded construction business, which often involved barter agreements. When the real estate market in Makhachkala crashed, the developers found themselves in a difficult position. "Debts, pressure from creditors, threats to our family. In the early 2010s, we had to flee to another country." When in the late summer of 2012 her father-in-law, who had been residing in a Russian region neighboring Dagestan, got sick, they came back to look after him, but he passed away within a week.

Her husband insisted that they gave his father a purely Islamic funeral, with no traditional local rituals added to the ceremony. But someone reported them to the authorities for having a "Wahhabi" funeral in the village. The situation started to spiral. Zarema's oldest daughter put on hijab like her mother but her school would not let her attend the classes wearing a scarf. Zarema's husband told their daughter not to take off her hijab and left for Turkey. Soon after the husband's departure, the family home was raided by the law enforcement authorities who warned Zarema against her husband's return. Then she learned that her husband had a second wife.

> I was devastated … I got kind of stupefied, I could not even talk normally … It came to me as a shock that he'd been having a second wife without me knowing about it for so long. He kept saying how sorry he was, but I felt numb. Of course, he started paying much more attention to me … I understood that God permitted them to do this. But … it was a betrayal of me … My brother took me back to Makhachkala.

It turned out that Zarema's husband could not come back to Dagestan: he was persecuted as a radical Muslim who gave his father an Islamic funeral, and his creditors were looking for him. After staying with her mother for a while, Zarema reluctantly went to Turkey. She could not just strike out 15 years of her marriage and could not separate her children from their father. "When we

41 Author's field materials: interview with a 40-year-old woman, Interview via WhatsApp, Al Hall, 2018 – 2019.

left Dagestan, we feared that one of our children could be kidnapped to blackmail us."

2.2.3 Turkish Stalemate

In 2013, living in Turkey was cheaper than in Dagestan. Zarema's husband remained unemployed, and for a year she was a breadwinner selling silver goods. Her husband spent the next year in the immigration detention center and was eventually deported to Dubai, but he returned illegally to Turkey. Their children went to a public school and studied well

But soon the authorities began raiding neighborhoods in Istanbul, and many Russian-speaking Muslims were deported. By the summer of 2015, the family almost ran out of money and was about to be evicted from its flat. They could be deported any time, but returning to Russia was no longer an option. According to Zarema, her husband decided to go to Syria mainly because he felt cornered with all those problems.42

> So in the summer 2015, he announced that he was taking children and going to Syria … I said, 'Do you understand what you are doing, where you are taking our child?' He went on how [people in Syria] needed help, how children were suffering there … He said he was going to be a driver there … I let him fool me—I was used to listening to him … We spent many nights talking this through. Finally, he gave me an ultimatum: he was taking our children, and I had to decide for myself. I was afraid of even mentioning this to our relatives … until the very last moment, until we arrived here. I thought we would not be going.43

2.2.4 Syria: As in a Fog

> We arrived in Syria in August 2015. Everything like in fog: guides, travel, barb-wired border. … Would it be a different kind of life there? … He insisted that this state was 'based on truth,' that there would be no more raids, that we would not be harassed any more, that it was the right place to bring up our girls where they would not be blamed for wearing hijabs or niqabs, that our boy would grow up as a real man there.

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42 Author's field m.aterials: interview with a 40-year-old woman, Interview via WhatsApp, Al Hall, 2018 – 2019.

43 Author's field materials: interview with a 40-year-old woman, Interview via WhatsApp, Al Hall, 2018 – 2019.

We were registered and had our passports taken away from us. For a while, some travelling back and forth was still allowed: parents used to visit their children, and a mother even managed to take her son out under false pretenses (now they have problems in Russia). Our phones were taken away, but later returned to us. Women and men were separated. Our 13-year-old son was considered an adult and stayed with my husband.

We were in Raqqa. Everything was foreign and strange; mattresses [in our flat] were dirty. Women and children were accommodated in one flat, and men in the other. We talked a lot. Most of the women followed their husbands, or met someone on the internet and came in pursuit of romance. Young girls, 17–18 years old. I wondered how they were not scared … They came in pursuit of romance, to be with a handsome brother with a beard. Some had been tired of living with their in-laws and followed their husbands.

Three days later, they took us to Iraq. We were put on the buses together with our husbands. Raqqa had not been destroyed yet. In Iraq, men were again taken away while women with children, between 65 and 80 people in total, were lodged in a three-story marble [guest] house, *maqqar*. There was no air conditioning, and the temperature outside could be up to 50°C. Each such house was assigned a *masul* by the IS's *katiba*.[44] The *masul* was responsible for food delivery, electric and plumbing repairs. Everything depended on what kind of person that was. Some houses had running water and electricity; others did not.[45]

Zarema's youngest daughter caught a stomach bug and almost died, spending a week in hospital. Their *masul* helped to save the girl—he chastised the doc- tors for their inaction and made them put the girl on iv fluids.

> He visited us [at the hospital], brought diapers and food, and took us under his wing. Russian-speaking people were taken care of by other Russian speakers. [Masul] was in charge of me while I was at the hospital [with my daughter]. Doctors were negligent until he showed up. But local Iraqi women from our ward were also helpful. Thanks God not a single child died in our *maqqar* although we thought they would all be dead.

44 *Katiba* is a military and administrative division in the Islamic State that includes a military unit, military base, garrison, logistics service, and families of active and deceased IS members.

45 Author's field materials: interview with a 40-year-old woman, Interview via WhatsApp, Al Hall, 2018 – 2019.

They lived in Tal Afar.46 From there, they could hear explosions in Mosul. "For a whole month, we did not see our husbands until we were accommodated in our own houses. Deep inside, I kept asking myself why I was there." Zarema had to become accustomed to using propane tanks for cooking or, if there was no propane, cooking on the *babour* stove with kerosene. Home chores and children took all her time. The *katiba* gave its families semi-automatic washing machines, kitchenware and some appliances. Electricity supply was unstable as there was only one electric generator for the whole *katiba*. In some cities, local businessmen bought electric generators and sold electricity. Propane was provided free of charge. Welfare was $50 per adult and $40 per child, but it later decreased to $40 per adult and $30 per child. It was enough; moreover, families with many children received some extra money. In Tal Afar,kids even had a pool.

Zarema's husband did not have a chance to realize where he had brought his family to—he was killed six months later while the IS was still in control of large territories and seemed to have the potential to build an actual state. "I do not know what he would say had he lived until today. … It all looked like make- believe: they were trying to create something, but did not succeed. … Hot heads went to fight. Many people died. … Half of our village were widows."

2.2.5 In Search for a Way Home

As a widow with many children, Zarema received a significant sum of money from her *katiba.* But she was alone, with kids, so she knew that she had to leave. The way from Mosul to Syria usually took 10 to 12 hours and was impossible to make without an accompanying man. Only five months later, when Mosul was about to be besieged, she and her son persuaded the *amir* to let them go to Syria. Her son made all the arrangements for their departure and found chaperones. Their minivan was packed with children's stuff; people were sitting on the floor. The second wife of Zarema's husband travelled with them. They drove in the direction of Deir ez-Zor, lost their way, luckily avoided a mine field, got stuck in the sand, and spent six hours in the desert running out of water before finally getting help.

In Deir ez-Zor, half of the city was in shambles. They were welcomed by a family they had known since their stay in Turkey. Zarema's daughters went back to school and studied English, Arabic, and math. After the bombings intensified, the school was closed down. Having an adult son allowed them to live separately, in their own flat, so Zarema did not need either to obey someone else's rules or to work.

46 Tal Afar is a city in Iraq, not far from Mosul.

In Raqqa, her son met some Russian-speaking young men, and he invited one of them, a 20-year-old Chechen guy, to his home. Zarema's daughter, who had turned 15, fell in love with him. Zarema's son as his sister's *wali* (guardian) concluded their marriage. The young man was wanted in Chechnya, and after two years in Syria he had nowhere to return. Soon after that, Zarema's son died during a bombing. "I was told that my son was dead. The neighborhood had been bombed, and his body remained under the rubbles of a tall house. The rubbles were left as they were … So I lost one of my children." Her son-in-law helped her to move from Raqqa to Mayadin, and they continued looking for options to get to Turkey. "My son-in-law also died in Raqqa. So we were alone, with no men." When the urgent evacuation from Mayadin began, they were offered assistance in escaping the IS. Zarema agreed.

> Sixteen people packed in a single sedan and left while no one saw us … We did not know what [the IS] would do to us if they learned about our intention to leave. We were picked up at a pre-arranged place. And so our journey began … We spent nights in houses with no windows or doors … scraped together all the money we had and gave it to the guide. We spent two weeks on the road. From the other bank of the river, we could see Mayadin and all the villages we fled being bombed … The siege must have followed … We were heading to [Arab] Azzah47 where we were going to cross to Turkey. But our guide took us directly to Kurds, and they took us to the [detention] camp by mini-buses.

2.2.6 No Way Out

Zarema arrived at the Kurdish tent detention camp in autumn 2017, remaining there up to the time of this writing. The area was not bombed, and people were not tortured there, like in Iraqi prisons. The detention camp was supplied with food; its inhabitants were allowed to receive credit card transfers from their relatives, do some shopping for their children, and even buy washing machines. Zarema started earning some money doing other people's laundry. Women organized schooling for their children. However, living in tents was difficult, children got sick, and no proper medical help was available. Careless use of gas stoves led to fires with fatalities among children on several occasions.

The population of the detention camp was very diverse. An old woman came to the IS to take her son, his wife, and their children home, but she ended up spending a year in the detention camp. A woman died of tuberculosis,

47 A town in Syria at the Syrian–Turkish border.

leaving three little daughters behind. Some people were brought to the IS as children, grew up in Syria and Iraq, married there and had children of their own—the second generation of children of war.

Many came to terms with the fact that they would be criminally prosecuted and imprisoned in Russia. They considered it a fair price for bringing children back to their families. "I got really scared for my kids after a girl [who had returned from Syria] blew herself up at the checkpoint [in Chechnya], as any of our daughters could have been in her place."[48] In some cases, families of women and children tried to get them back, offering ransom money.

"There are people who want to profit off our desperate situation. They find our relatives and tell them to pay a certain sum of money … But it is impossible [to get out of here]. Several girls tried to escape from another camp: some Kurds took $50,000 from them, pocketed the money, drove the girls around the camp and brought them back. I approached the camp administration [and asked], 'Would you be interested in selling us to our relatives?' [… They said,] 'No, we do not take money. We are waiting for your government to take you back.' … [Non-IS Islamist] armed group members in Idlib tried to help us (both make some money and help), but failed to strike a deal with Kurds. Several non-Russian-speakers attempted escapes. But all of them were later returned—caught, imprisoned, and beaten. … Another option is to go back to the IS. The Islamic State once exchanged [prisoners], and they took a group of young women, those who wanted to go and those who did not … We were afraid of them coming after us. Only the women who had husbands [in the IS] were ready to come back, out of despair."

2.3 *Case Study 2: Forbidden Love*

Aysha[49] was born in the Vedenskyi District of the Chechen Republic in 1987. Her father died in a car crash when she was six. In 1999, during the second Chechen war, her mother took her and her sister to Saratov, where her father's brother lived. Her uncle was a director of a large factory and a secular person. He essentially supported his late brother's family. In 2002, Aysha's maternal grandfather and uncle were forcibly disappeared by the Russian military in Chechnya. Aysha graduated from the law school but has never worked as a le- gal professional. Her sister married an ethnic Chechen who had lived in Ukraine for quite a while, and they moved to Germany.

48 "V Groznom zhenshchina vzorvala sebia u kontrol'nogo punkta politsii," *Novaya gazeta*, 17 November 2018, https://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2018/11/17/146861-v-groznom- zhenschina-sovershila-samopodryv-u-kpp (accessed in November 2019).

49 Author's field materials: WhatsApp interview with a 31-year-old woman, detention campon Kurds-controlled territories in Syria, 2018.

2.3.1 First Love

According to Aysha, she started praying when she was eight, when the first Chechen war began—almost everyone in Chechnya started praying at that time. However, she had not been consciously religious and had not begun wearing hijab until she was 18. Her family, particularly her uncle, disapproved of her interest in Islam. Around the same time, in 2008, she met a Chechen man on the internet. Aysha is very reluctant to speak about her eight-year-long love story with a tragic ending, so it was told to us by her aunt.

> Everyone in his [Aysha's fiancé's] family were members of armed groups. When he was the last man left [in the family] … his mother took him to Azerbaijan. Aysha wanted to marry him, but my sister would not let her because her brother-in-law who had been supporting them all along [hated Wahhabis and considered the whole family of his sister-in-law Wahhabis]. The [second Chechen] war was on. We could not help her, and she was a hostage of circumstance … My sister insisted that they broke up … and this internet romance was over for the time being.50

Around 2012, her uncle's business in Saratov fell apart. He sold the flat Aysha lived in, and she moved back to Grozny. There, she resumed contact with her old flame over the internet. He got married in Azerbaijan. Then, as a refugee, he was officially relocated by the UN to France. She again agreed to marry him as a second wife. In 2014, without asking her mother's permission, she got a Schengen visa and went to Germany, ostensibly to visit her sister and brother- in-law, who lived in Kiel. At her sister's, one day she went out, saying she would be back in a minute, but instead she got into a car and left.

Later, she texted that she had married and was going to France. 'I'm ok, don't worry' [she wrote]. That guy came to pick her up … That was when the tragedy started … Her big sister's husband was an Al-Ahbash follower51 (he had converted in Ukraine), and as such hated Wahhabis. They said they would better kill her than let her marry a Wahhabi. They started looking for her and reached out through their German [Chechen community] to the Chechen community in France … They promised her, 'If they bring you back, we will officially marry you to him.' She was brought back two days later … They took her passport,

50 Author's field materials, Berlin, 2019.

51 Al-Ahbash is a Sufi religious movement in Islam. In the post-Soviet space, it has been most active in Ukraine. Ukrainian Al-Ahbash followers have criticised and distanced themselves from the other, non-Sufi Islamic groups. They assume intransigent attitude towards Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood (including accusing them of *takfir*, being non-believers) while fiercely competing with them for influence over Muslims in Ukraine.

beat her up a bit … took her to Kyiv. In Kyiv, she was beaten once again, and all her ID papers and phone were taken from her. They bought her a train ticket and sent her to Moscow … In Moscow, the FSB officers were waiting for her. Her uncle in Saratov officially reported her as a Wahhabi. … She was transferred to Chechnya … In Chechnya, the poor girl was brutally beaten, all personal belongings, including her passport and her phone, were taken from her, and she was detained.52

2.3.2 Escape to Syria: Marrying the First Man who came Along

Aysha was 26, and she did not know what she wanted more: to start a new family or to leave her old one.

> And then I met my husband. My family [sister] knew him: he was an orphan. He was born and raised in Saratov. He was religious and very good-tempered. We did not court for too long. He left for Turkey and from there, asked me to marry him. I knew he would not be accepted [by my family] as he was an orphan and he was younger than me [he was 21]. So I made up my mind: I bought an air ticket, wrote a farewell letter to my mother and left. We got married in Istanbul. My husband said that we were not going to stay in Istanbul and had to move to another city … I began to suspect that the city would not be in Turkey and that he had been heading to Syria from the start.

Later on, Aysha's husband told her that he had watched many videos and come to the conclusion that "it was his duty to help." Aysha believed that there was no way back for her: in Russia she would be severely punished, and in Turkey her family would find her, as they had found her in France. In 2014 crossing the border with Syria was still easy; they settled in Manbij.

At first, their life was ordinary, with shopping at markets and stores where all goods were available, except for alcohol and tobacco. Usually, it was Aysha's husband who did the shopping. Between 2014 and 2015, foreign women rarely walked the streets on their own and were mostly accompanied by their husbands; widows were few and looked after. Since mid-2015, more and more foreign women, female *muhajirs*, could be regularly seen walking or even driving in the streets. Foreigners were housed in abandoned properties. Aysha's family life with her husband lasted nine and a half months—until he was killed in a drone attack in Iraq, on his way to Mosul. A month later, she had a daughter and moved to a widow house, a *maqqar*.

52 Author's field materials, Berlin, 2019.

2.3.3 Life Under the Bombs

Widows had their own rooms but shared a kitchen and a bathroom. Several times a week, the *masul* would take widows to the market and stores and to the hospital, if needed.

> In Manbij, widows had a very good life, although we believed back then that our liberty was restricted … In three years, I stayed in three *maqqars*. My first *maqqar* in Manbij was mostly inhabited by women from Chechnya, Dagestan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well as some Somali women from the UK53—they were moved to the European *maqqar* later … In my *maqqars* in Raqqa and Mayadin, mostly women from Chechnya and Dagestan stayed …

Widows did not need to work: they received the aforementioned welfare. New widows also received $1,000 on top of that when their husband died (though later this lump sum was cut down to $400). Newly-weds received $1,000. Raqqa's mosques organized courses for women on Islam foundations, *fiqh*, and anatomy for the purposes of the first aid administration. Women travelled to their classes by bus, with each bus divided by a screen into male and female parts.

When the assault against Manbij was launched, widows were taken to Raqqa. Since the death of her husband, Aysha often thought of getting out. However, the situation back in Russia got even more complicated: a Chechen woman who had returned home from Syria reported everyone she knew, including Aysha and her mother, to the law enforcement authorities. As a result, Aysha's mother was summoned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the FSB several times a month. Raqqa was being bombed, and Aysha experienced severe bombardments twice.

> We were sure we were going to die … but our house was not hit … Children covered with dust and cement were running down the stairs … In half an hour, our *masul* came to pick us up during the bombing and took us to his home … We, five widows with children, were assigned to another [guest] house. It was crowded; rooms were shared by two or three sisters. However, we had more space: some women remarried; others found another accommodation. (…) Remarrying was easy: a man would propose, and a woman would agree to meet him in the presence of witnesses. If both agreed [to the marriage], they did some [medical] tests. The fiancé

53 "British and Canadian women are usually naturalised citizens who originally came from Africa or Asia," author's field materials, 2018.

> had to get [a reference from his *katiba*], and if his reputation was fine, imam would read *nikah* [perform a marriage ceremony] and that was it. It was hard to be single. But I did not remarry. … The next bombardment killed many people. My friend who was with me that night now remembers that bombing as a joke—she was in the besieged Raqqa later and lost two sons, and she is still living in the IS-controlled villages.54

Aysha stayed in Raqqa for about a year, until the offensive started. Widows were evacuated to Mayadin, which was being bombed too. People from al- Tabqah, Raqqa, al-Bab and other cities flocked to Mayadin.

2.3.4 Detention Camp

In 2017, they started looking for an escape route to Turkey. But it turned out that all guides who promised to take people to Arab Azzah brought their groups to the nearest Kurdish checkpoint and pocketed the money. This was how Aysha, with the group of other widows, was captured by Kurds in October 2017. Their guides charged $1,200 per family. In some cases, widows paid $15,000—only to find themselves in the same camp. The Kurds held them in the al-Hol detention camp for a month and then transferred them to the Roj detention camp (both located in Al-Hasakah Governorate in the northeast of Syria). "I had no other choice than to leave. And then what happened, happened, and I ended up here [in Syria]. Now, after the nightmare I've been though, I might have acted differently and would have persuaded my husband to leave me in Turkey."55

2.4 *Case Study 3: No Choice*

For some members of rural communities in Dagestan, getting to Syria was almost pre-determined by their origin. A Balakhani-born56 female detainee in the Roj camp, Mariam, is one such example. Her mother died in childbirth. Her father used to work at a hydroelectric power station and passed away in 2003, when she was 20. Her brothers and half-brothers were killed in Chechnya and

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54 Author's field materials: WhatsApp interview with a 31-year-old woman, detention camp on Kurds-controlled territories in Syria, 2018.

55 Author's field materials: WhatsApp interview with a 31-year-old woman, detention camp on Kurds-controlled territories in Syria, 2018.

56 Balakhani is a village in the Untsukul District, Dagestan. For more information about the situation in the area, see: D. V. Sokolov, "Zatoplennyi mir koisubulintsev: Elektrichestvo v obmen za abrikosy," in *Obshchestvo kak ob"ekt i sub"ekt vlasti. Ocherki politicheskoi antropologii Kavkaza*, ed. Iu. Iu. Karpov, (St Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie, 2012) pp. 61–90.

during the 2011–2012 security operations in Makhachkala. Her younger brother was complicit in the murder of Gazimagomed Magomedov of Gimry,57 a member of the Dagestani parliament and the informal boss of the Untsukul District, including its Irganay hydroelectric power station. He married her off to his Azerbaijani associate, who later left for Syria. She had cancer and received chemotherapy in Makhachkala while her younger brother was hunted by the police. She had no other close relatives but him. She left the country right fromthe hospital bed.

All the bridges were burnt, both figuratively and literally—her family home had been burnt down because of a blood feud. She lived in Turkey with her brother for a while; then her brother took her to her husband in Iraq. Already pregnant, she had her regular cancer check-up in Raqqa. She was advised against childbirth by her doctors; however, she kept her pregnancy and delivered a girl. Her brother was killed in Mosul at the same time. Her husband decided to take her to Turkey for treatment, but Kurdish militias apprehended them en route. Her husband was imprisoned, and she was sent to the al-Hol detention camp, all medical imaging and money for treatment taken from her. She was later transferred to the Roj camp, where she gave birth to twins. At the time of writing, she had four children; her cancer was progressing, but she kept refusing the on-site surgery in the camp.

2.5 *Case Studies 4: Social Media Matchmaking*

The following two case studies have the following in common: being manipulated by "WhatsApp husbands" who used *Da'wah*, an invitation to Islam, to separate their victims from their families and provoke their departure for good. And each step down that road made it more and more difficult for the women to turn back.

The first case is of a Chechen woman, 22-years-old, named Hava, who was born and raised in a village of the Khasavyurt District, Dagestan. Her parents divorced, and she was brought up by her grandparents, as her mother worked in Moscow and her father, an Ichkerian separatist, had emigrated to Europe. After her high school graduation, she married her first husband—a neighbor recommended by her family. The couple left for Moscow to live with her mother. She was admitted to the Moscow Industrial and Economic College. After six

57 Gazimagomed Magomedov of Gimry was a member of the People's Assembly in Dagestan and an Ichkerian separatist. Until his death, he was in control of the armed insurgency in the Untsukul District. He was killed in his home village of Gimry in 2007. For more information, see: Yulia Latynina, "Deputat i vakhkhabisty," *Novaya gazeta*, 22 March 2008, https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2008/03/23/38750-deputat-i-vahhabisty (accessed in November 2019).

months in Moscow, she divorced her husband and started to think more about religion. She was introduced to Islam by her second cousin, with whom she had grown up. "He studied Islam and encouraged me [to do so]. He used to say, 'Cover your head [with a scarf].' … But my family would not let me wear a scarf until I married. My brother was an exemplary believer. He left for Syria and has never written since."

She felt oppressed by her family and community rather than by the authorities: "[They] would not even let me listen to Koran or study Arabic … My moth- er was totally against this as there had never been any religious people in our family … In the Moscow metro, drunk Russians used to harass me." She wanted to join her father, a Muslim believer, in France, but her mother considered it abetrayal.

> [A friend introduced me to] my husband, a Chechen man from Chechnya, through WhatsApp. He explained everything to me in detail. [He said] I was in danger; I could be disappeared and, at best, immediately killed by cops. He said that [Syria] was safe and good and invited me to come. I came and married him in April 2015. He was wounded and moved around on crutches … He mostly stayed at home or spent his time with brothers … I did house chores, cleaning … took care of him … visited friends sometimes. Just regular life. The bombings were rare … bearable in the beginning. Then [the IS] started losing one city after another … The bombings intensified … We were losing our friends … After 18 months, I got pregnant in Raqqa, and my husband … sent me to Mayadin right before [Raqqa] was besieged. A month and a half later, he got killed … He got killed just a week after I gave birth, without seeing his son. Then panic spread [all over the city].

After her husband died, her father invited her to come to France and was going to arrange her travel through Jabhat al-Nusra. But she never left and has gone all the way from the *maqqar* to the Kurdish camp.

The second case is of a Darghin woman from Makhachkala, Patimat, who was born in 1995. In 2000, her father went missing in Bratislava, Slovakia, where he had gone on business. First, she and her mother stayed with their relatives. In high school, she began her religious studies.

> In the [North] Caucasus, everyone considers themselves Muslims. I also considered myself a Muslim. But it was far from being [a real] Muslim. I met some like-minded sisters on the internet. I also met a brother who explained many things about Islam to me. He found me on the VKontakte [social network]. Later, we switched to WhatsApp … He was persuading

> me to go [to Syria, saying], 'It is the only place where you can maintain your faith. Otherwise, you'll be persecuted.' I thought about that and decided to leave. I married him on the internet. No one knew about that. My mother and brother got suspicious about my changing appearance and behavior. My brother started beating me. My husband knew about that and kept saying that I should go. My choice was either to go to my husband or to stay and proceed with my studies at the university in Dagestan. … I decided for the departure. I was hoping for a quiet life. It was very difficult for me to give up on my studies and career plans. … Dagestan was fine for me. I was not harassed as I was new to Islam and I was not put on the [preventive] register, although I was wearing a black hijab.
>
> My husband bought me a ticket to Turkey, and when I got to Istanbul, I panicked, 'What did I do? How could I do this to mom?' My husband's associates met me. They took me to a flat. I was crying and asking to let me go home. And my husband answered, 'You made your choice.' I had no money to escape, and I did not know how. My mother was devastated by this.
>
> My husband had already been married for eight years, and I was his second wife. He was Dagestani, and he was 28 at the time. We were completely different people, with different views. Our marriage lasted for only a year. I asked for divorce. He was seriously wounded back then, and his family nursed him. There was no place for me [in his life]. He agreed to the divorce, but did not let me go. As soon as we divorced, he married several widows with children. Islam encourages polygamy. Women suffer from that as they get very jealous.
>
> A year later, I married a Chechen man I had met through sisters in Syria. I had a son. My second husband wanted to take me out [of the IS] as he realized the gravity of the situation. He knew what war looked like and understood that it was no place for a woman. Currently, he is alive and held in Kurdish prison in Kobanî.

This second husband sent her to the Kurds, who put her in the camp.

3 Conclusion

The radicalisation of our female interviewees does not seem to be a gradual "cognitive evolution."[58] Many of them, in the initial stage, experienced a sudden change in their identity. In their accounts of their conversion to Islam,

58 Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, op. cit.

they report they drastically changed their lifestyle: "I began performing *namaz*, decided to wear a scarf, and my life changed."59 They immediately set themselves against the family, community, and friends they had had before they turned to Islam. Their radical views shaped only *after* their conversion, be- cause of a change of circumstances. For the majority of these women, ideology does not explain their departure for the caliphate. The reasons they cited most often are: "followed my husband," "wanted to maintain my faith," "had to help other Muslims," or they felt unsafe at home due to family oppression or the harassment by law enforcement authorities.

None of the persons we interviewed went through the stage of some abstract Islamic radicalism. Their anger explicitly targeted specific opponents— the competing religious group or the enemies of Islam, such as their relatives who held other beliefs; the official Spiritual Boards of Muslims that used the government's administrative resources and security services; the Russian government, its security forces, and their regional departments; the West in its entirety; or the Muslims who did not join the caliphate. Many women who left for Syria accepted the ideology of the IS only superficially, and until they got involved in the actual fighting, they were not radicals or were radicals in name only.

Even Gulnara Rustamova—who was motivated by her human rights activities in Dagestan, the death of her close relatives, and her work with the widows of often innocent Muslim men—went to Syria to bring home her daughter and her grandchildren. However, she had to stay there until the very end, as her son-in-law stood by the caliphate and would not let them go.60 Many women were severely traumatized: the Baghouz massacre survivors who had seen their children burn lost their minds and in some cases later died of shock in the al-Hol detention camp.61

The North Caucasus has been the sight of significant competition between the IS, Al-Qaeda, and other Islamist projects. All political and religious leaders of the *ummah* are equally interested in the invitation to Islam, *da'wah:* the more Muslims, the more potential recruits they have. The factors contributing particularly to the radical project market expansion include discrimination and repression against Muslims. Therefore, the beneficiaries of the most radical groups (preachers and leaders of terrorist organizations) have a vested interest in the crackdown on Muslims by the government and security forces.

59 Author's field materials: interview with a 38-year-old Dagestani woman held in a detention camp, Syrian Kurdistan.

60 Author's field materials, 2019.

61 Author's field materials, 2019.

Such crackdowns push more and more recruits and new donors towards their networks. This mechanism has been called "jujitsu politics."62

On the other hand, the official clergy and the security services are, too, interested in their opponents acquiring an image of brutal terrorists. This allows them to expand powers and receive even more resources to fight "international terrorism," not just some local religious dissidents. When the security forces can directly influence court decisions, peaceful conflict resolution can hardly be reached. Moderate preachers, opposition leaders, and human rights de- fenders and journalists who seek justice for all get caught in the crossfire.

Local, regional, and global "market[s] of fundamentalist ideologies"63 need a regular supply of recruits and resources. The emergence of such a regional market in the North Caucasus has been prompted by the collapse of rural communities and urban migration. Al-Qaeda represented by the Caucasus Emirate entered this regional market first and took over the Chechen resistance, as well as local Islamist armed groups in Dagestan and other republics of the North Caucasus. However, when the second-generation migrants hit the glass ceiling in the globalized environment, the IS won the competition with Al-Qaeda, by enrolling women in its destructive utopia project.

62 Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, op. cit.; Olivier Roy, op. cit.
63 Olivier Roy, op. cit.

Appendix

Table 1 Remote head count of Russian-speaking female detainees in the Roj camp (as of early 2019). Author's calculations.

No.	Origin	Age	Number of children	Circumstances of departure forSyria/Iraq
1	Dagestan	39	5	Left with her husband and children to escape financial difficulties and government persecution.
2	Chechnya	32	1	Left to be with the man she married on the internet. She could not marry the man of her choice at home, and her family oppressed her for being religious.
3	Chechnya	23	1	After her divorce from her first husband, left to be with the man she married on the internet. Her family disapproved of Islam.
4	Dagestan	22	1	Left to be with the man she married on the internet. She was choosing between going to Syria and getting a university degree.
5	Dagestan	36	4	Followed her brother. Her husband was killed in Dagestan; she got sick and had no family in Russia.
6	Dagestan	23	1	Was brought by her mother and got married later.
7	Dagestan	37	4	Followed her husband.
8	Dagestan	30	0	Followed her husband as a second wife.
9	Dagestan	43	4	Her first husband was killed in Dagestan as an armed group member, and she fled persecution to Egypt together with her second husband.
10	Dagestan	35	–	Followed her husband.
11	Dagestan	70	–	Followed her son and his family.

Table 1 Remote head count of Russian-speaking female detainees in the Roj (*cont.*)

No.	Origin	Age	Number of children	Circumstances of departure forSyria/Iraq
12	Chechnya and Turkey	60	–	After her son was burnt by Ramzan Kadyrov's people, her whole family fled to Turkey and then relocated to Syria.
13	Ethnic Georgian from Russia	26	2	Came to maintain her faith when she was 18. Later she got married in Syria.
14	Ethnic Chechen from Kabardino-Balkaria	21	1	Left to be with the man she married on the internet.
15	Dagestan	22	2	Followed her husband.
16	Dagestan	30	5	Followed her husband.
17	Karachay-Cherkessia	30	3	Followed her husband.
19	Azerbaijan	23	2	Came to maintain her faith.
20	Chechnya	35	4	Followed her husband.
21	Ethnic Russian	38	5	Followed her husband.
22	Ethnic Russian	60	–	Mother of female detainee no. 21, she came to take her daughter and grandchildren home.
23	Dagestan	25	2	Followed her husband.
24	Dagestan	50–55	–	Mother of female detainee no. 23, she came to take her daughter and grandchildren home.
25	Tatarstan	55		Came to take her son and daughter home. Her children refused to leave the IS with her. On her way back, she was captured by Kurds. In the detention camp, she has been taking care of three orphaned children whose mother died of tuberculosis.
26	Ingushetia	28	2	Followed her husband.
27	Chechnya	35	4	Followed her husband.
28	Ethnic Russian from Dagestan	27	2	Followed her husband.
29	Dagestan	25	2	Followed her husband.

Table 1 Remote head count of Russian-speaking female detainees in the Roj (*cont.*)

No.	Origin	Age	Number of children	Circumstances of departure forSyria/Iraq
30	Dagestan	24	1	Left to be with the man she married on the internet.
31	Dagestan	25	2	Followed her husband.
32	Dagestan	25	3	Followed her husband.
33	Ingushetia	55	–	Came to take her sons and their families home.
34	Dagestan	27	2	Daughter-in-law of female detainee no. 33, she followed her husband.
35	Karachay-Cherkessia	30	3	Followed her husband.
36	Chechnya	30	5	Followed her husband. She is suffering from leucosis.
37	Ethnic Azerbaijani from Russia	18	–	Was tricked into going to Turkey by her brother when she was around 12 and then taken to Syria.
38	Dagestan	25	1	Left to be with the man she married on the internet.
39	Dagestan	27	2	Followed her husband.
40	Ethnic Russian from Saratov	32	4	Followed her husband.
41	Chechnya	23	2	Followed her husband.
42	Dagestan	35	3	Followed her husband.
43	Ethnic Uzbek from Russia	28	5	Followed her husband.
44	Chechnya	40	4	Followed her husband.
45	Dagestan	22	1	Came with her mother to take her brother home. Her brother did not let them go back, and she got married.
46	Dagestan	55	–	Mother of female detainee no. 45, she came with her daughter to take her son home.
47	Dagestan	27	3	Followed her husband.
48	Dagestan	33	6	Followed her husband.
49	Dagestan	30	3	Followed her husband.

Table 1 Remote head count of Russian-speaking female detainees in the Roj (*cont.*)

No.	Origin	Age	Number of children	Circumstances of departure forSyria/Iraq
50	Tatarstan	30	0	Came to maintain her faith.
51	Tajikistan	30	4	Followed her husband. A university graduate, she speaks several languages.